



## Who Really Owns Our Stuff?

Josh Schaa

Now that little fish loves his bubbles. Maybe a few days in kindergarten where they teach the value of sharing your toys would help this little guy out. I love animated movies, just like *Finding Nemo*, and all those Pixar films.

Why I love them I don't know, I just enjoy seeing personified things, maybe it is because I wish I lived in a world like Michael Knight in *Knight Rider* with a car that had a personality. I know it sounds weird but it is fun to live in a world that gives personalities to inanimate objects. But for whatever reason I love these kind of movies.

But what makes it really funny is that in these kinds movies you can often find applicable lessons to a real life. For example when we look at this little fish that runs around screaming my bubbles it seems ridiculous to think that is real. If I were to tell you to think of that fish as a human you would think that is crazy. Seriously, first off why the crap would any regular person be obsessed with bubbles and secondly we all know that humans are taught to share from a very young age.

Now I didn't have to learn this lesson my kindergarten class because the class consisted of two people, Elizabeth and me. And since all I wanted to do was play with the Morse code machine and she wanted to play with paper dolls we were all good. But regardless at home my parents taught my brothers and me to share and play nice with each other.

And I learned that lesson just like pretty much everyone in this room. But to be honest I love my stuff. I love gadgets and junk and knick-knacks. I like my tools, electronics, furniture, vehicles and house. Those things are mine and I like it that way. In fact when Jenna and I get some new and cool, not just a new couch or pan or something but something like when I got **MY** three-wheeler almost two years ago. To be able to proudly call this machine **Mine**, Jenna and I went through quite a ritual.

Now this ritual consisted us debating what I was willing to give up to make this three-wheeler "mine." I think I had to admit that I would call my truck our truck, not necessarily

giving up the truck as mine but just to admit that it was our truck. Now I know this sounds ridiculous but we were just having fun. But in that fun there was some truth. As human beings we like to lay claim to stuff. Everything from land to three wheelers to the moon, even in my marriage, which legally we both equally own everything, we have to decide who owns what.

Maybe we aren't so far from the fish Bubbles after all, claiming anything around us that could remotely be considered worthy of owning.

But what is wrong with claiming what is legally mine? I mean I have a title for that three-wheeler that says it belongs to both Jenna and myself. We have receipts for what we buy, the proper legal documentation saying that we have the right to the stuff. If someone took those things from us we could call the police and prove that those items belonged to us. And the more stuff we legally own the better off we are.

Success in our society is measured by how much stuff you accumulate. You are doing well if you have a big house with a two car garage and two new cars in the garage. You have to have a 67" flat screen TV with 4000 channels, new furniture, an X-Box, PS3 and Wii. You have to have a well manicured backyard with an oversized grill that you never use. Then if you have enough clothes to not repeat an outfit in a month then you are doing pretty well.

Now as Christians we are living in this world but we are not suppose to be of this world like it tells us in John 17:14-18 what does that mean for us in a world that measures success by junk. What is our line? Are we suppose to hate all cars, couches, entertainment centers, gaming systems, flat screen TVs, lazy boys, refrigerators and the list goes on. Am I required as a Christian to never go to the movies or not buy a car?

Yes ... now we are going to move on our service and take up a tithe...

No, I am just kidding. Well interestingly enough the Bible talks about the ownership of stuff and how that whole thing works. Pretty sweet huh? Now this may seem crazy to some of you but the Bible actually has all kinds of stuff like this.

Psalm 24: 1&2

***The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.***

As David the writer of psalms points out in these verses that it is God who made this world. So rightly so everything in it belongs to Him. This includes "all who live in it," which is us and everyone else in the world.

But what about all of the stuff that I have worked so hard to get? Doesn't that belong to me? I've worked hard to be able to own what I do. Everything in my house has a story that tells you how we obtained it in a rush with Craigslist, or on sale or at a yard sale. Almost anything you could point out or pick up I could tell you a story about, why? Honestly just because I love to tell stories. But all of those stories make each one of those things a little more "mine". Not to mention that I work a job and paid currency for these items, so they are mine.

But if everything in this earth belongs to God then what about all the stuff that I own on this earth? Is all that stuff that we own ours or Gods? In the 25th chapter of the book of Matthew we come across Jesus telling a parable about just such a thing.

Matthew 25:14-30

***“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.***

***“Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***

To help explain this parable I am going to go ahead and identify the roles for you so you know what is going on a little bit better. God is the master. We are the servants. Now the talents get interesting. When Jesus told this story a Talent was a measurement of weight, it is assumed that Jesus was speaking of Talents of Gold. Now no one can really nail down what the amount means but it is roughly 20 years labor wages.

So I went to the calculator, and going with 30,000 dollars annual for labor wages today that means a Talent is worth 600,000 dollars. So to the lowest slave the master gave 600,000 dollars, then to the next he gave 1.2 million dollars to and to the last servant he gave 3 million dollars.

Now this is where it is confusing, at least for me it is. What are those Talents that God has

left us with until he returns? The different ideas that have been presented are spiritual gifts or monetary blessings. I am of the opinion that the Talent refers pretty much to the life that God has given you, including the spiritual gifts and monetary items.

So what I believe this is saying is that God has given us a gift that we are in charge of until he comes back. What we do with those gifts is completely our decision. Now the gifts that he has given us is not just money like in this parable. It can be your talents, time and then there is all that stuff like your car, place where you stay and all your stuff and your money.

To be what is often referred to as a good steward, or a good care taker of what God has given us, can mean very different things in each persons life. Since I am the one standing up here I will use my life for example. Now by American standards I am not that rich, in fact I would be considered poor. By world standards where 40% of the world's population lives on roughly 2 dollars a day I am quite well off.

But I would consider myself a very blessed person and I try to be a good steward, mostly whenever it is convenient for me. For example, and I am already regretting telling everyone in this room this, in August of 2008 Jenna and I went truck shopping. There were multitudes of reasons for us to be on the market or a truck one of the prominent ones was that I like trucks. But second to that or maybe a little bit higher than that was that I like to help people.

Every single spiritual gift test or quiz I have ever taken has told me that I am a servant or have a servant's heart or something of that nature. So I like to help people, I get joy from that kind of thing. So Jenna and I knew that being members of a college church that a truck is something that comes few and far between but the need for one is quite often.

So we got a truck to help people and to help the church out because the church desperately needed access to a truck. Now thankfully Ryan is not shy about asking me to use my truck or to have me and my truck help with something. Because I like to think that I am important enough to be busy. Which often times I am, but sometimes I just don't feel like going out and moving stuff with my truck.

But the truck, Roxie is her name by the way, does not belong to me. The truck along with everything else I own belongs to God. And since that is true and I am merely a caretaker of this truck then I need to be willing to use it to bless others. Now does that mean I am not paranoid when I loan it out because I am not available to operate it, no. You can ask Ryan; I go through this thorough check over of the whole truck. Then I tell him to make sure and let me know if anything seems weird on it. Now it may not be that nice of a truck...but it is MY truck.

Oh, wait no it is God's truck. But I am the caretaker of it for now and so I am going to make sure I take care of it well.

Just the other day I was speaking to Joshua Nedrud and he was telling me about how he and his roommates, or the guys house, help provide clean water for people around the globe. However they don't do this directly. They are donating space in their garage for the church to be able to store all the junk that the church has. This frees up money that the

church was previously spending on a storage unit, so the church can use that money to help support Blood Water Mission and their quest to provide clean water to the world. So in giving up space where they could continue to amass huge cardboard figures of movie characters compliments of Harkins Theater and Mitch, they provide clean water to the world.

A few semesters back I was a member of a small group that was lead by Ryan. There are some people in here who were also members of this group. But once a month instead of getting together and talking about ourselves we would all go chip in 5 bucks and buy one-dollar burgers from Burger King. Then we would head down to the park at Speedway and Stone and put 20 to 30 burgers out on that cold hard picnic table. Then we would walk around the park and invite anyone who was there to come and get a burger and a glass of water. Most of the time the burgers would disappear quickly and people would walk off. But every once in a while someone would stop and talk. Once it was because they wanted to see if they could get some money from us.

But one time this one guy who we recognized asked us if we remembered his girlfriend. He gave us her name but I can't seem to remember it. But he asked if we remembered her, and we said no seeing that we didn't know anyone there by name really. But he proceeded to tell us about how touched she was that we would take our time to give them burgers. And then he told us that she had passed away but how much she loved seeing us come to the park. It was incredible to me to think that some grease could change a life.

On December 12, 2009 a group of people put an idea into action. They called it Help Portrait. I would like for you to take a look at what this group did with their time and what they had. This video was a test event to evaluate the possibility of help portrait. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9tu1XrBn3A&feature=player\\_embedded#](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9tu1XrBn3A&feature=player_embedded#)

It may seem trivial to go take a picture of someone but for the people in front of the screen it was the moment away from a stressful life. Who knew that a 4x6 photo could change a life?

So, why all the heart-warming stories? Because all of these stories are stories of people giving of what God gave them. Everything in the world belongs to God. If we lose focus of that truth we often get into the mindset that everything is ours, my bubbles.

Turn with me to

Luke 12: 16-21

***And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." "***

***"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."***

I know for me I am often like this rich man. I have forgotten that it is not my truck. I have lost

sight of who really owns the truck and that it is my responsibility to be the caretaker of the stuff that God has given me. Part of that is to do what God would want with the stuff that I have.

There are a lot of different ways of coming up with things to help make sure that we have our priorities right. With the establishment of the new church after Jesus ascended to heaven we see one example.

Acts 2:42-47

***They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.***

For some of you this may seem extreme and for others that sounds like a good idea. I would make a guess that those who say it sounds good don't have as much stuff as those who don't like the plan so much. Personally I think we should do this, so Colter I think I should come by and pick up your 67" screen TV later. Seriously though, I don't think my truck... God's truck is big enough for that TV.

Now in all seriousness what am I saying to do about all the things that God has blessed you with? Well I am going to break up what I think you all probably have some kind of access to the following: time, money, stuff.

The group of people that we have in here I know is a mixed crowd, from college students to people already into the career field. But I believe that what I am going to say applies to everyone.

Let's start with time. I know for me personally I think I am a pretty important person and I have a lot going on. I have class, homework, work, a marriage, my dog and the list goes on. But I need to realize that just like my truck my time is not my own. To think that I am so important that I own my time is pretty ridiculous. God gave me my life, he blessed me by getting me into a good university and has given me a life that is amazing. So for me to believe that I own the time I have is ridiculous.

But giving of your time doesn't mean you have to go join the peace corps and go to some foreign country for 7 years. Although you could do something like that and that would be awesome. But lets start small. The other day I was going into work, and I have been blessed with a great job over in the school of natural resources. I was running 4 minutes late and trying to recover from a bike ride to campus. But as I was walking into the ground floor of the building I saw about 4 people staring up and down the hallways.

I know everyone in here has seen people like this at one point or another around campus.

So since I was 99% sure that I know which room they were hunting I inquired of them what room they were looking for. Sure enough it was the only lecture hall in the building. I provided the directions they needed and went on my way. I know this may sound like a dumb idea but it was something very small. But it was MY time and I almost blew them off because my time is so important and I was late, oh wait that's wrong it is God's time. Some other suggestions are volunteering to help in simple ways. We here at DR believe this to be important so we try to provide opportunities for our community to give their time. One of the easiest ones for students is to come out to our water table we have every Tuesday and help give out water. You don't have to be there long, but just show up if you can and help out.  
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Now I would like to address the Elephant in the room. And I contemplated very hard on how I could avoid this conversation in here today but realized that it would be an injustice to you. Money, what about the money thing? Well I did not want ever to be the person talking about tithing and stuff in church. But thankfully I am doing this at Damascus Road. So the money that is put in the offering at DR does not pay for our ministers, Ryan and Tim. In fact none of that money pays anyone. The money is used to pay for the stuff that we do like renting this room to be able to hold church. Then 50%, that is right: half of that money is given to missionaries and causes that we have researched and deemed appropriate.

The money that we have God has called us to give joyfully. If you just give a tithe to try and invest and think it is some kind of great repayment plan then you have the wrong mentality. God has blessed you to live in a country where there is employment that actually pays your expenses and more. This summer I was in Zimbabwe and it was huge deal that the unemployment went from 99% to about 95% unemployment. So we are doing pretty well no matter how much we whine about not getting the right job in the tough job market. The main thing is that God has asked us to give some portion of our earnings back to him.

The last point I have already touched on a fair amount but I will hit it once more. Stuff, the things that we own are not ours, they belong to God. But how can we express that without being foolish about it? I mean I think it would be a poor idea for me to just go give the keys to God's truck to the first person I meet on the street who looks needy. But what if you don't have a truck or a garage? The easiest way to deal with this in my opinion is to let some leading members of the church know what you have. Like if you have a car, then let us know that you are willing to give rides and we can ask you to do that for church events. If you have a X-Box then let us know and we might call on you for a Halo party.

There are a lot of options and our church is good about making it easy and accessible for all of the options, I would argue that it is true more than a lot of churches. But I know for me the first step is the hardest, it was the hardest and it continues to be.

The first step is to get over yourself. I had to realize that I am not that important but if I recognize that God can use me to do amazing things then it is a little bit easier. It isn't that much fun to realize that I am not important enough to always have a full schedule all about me and to always be using all of my junk.

Bubbles, the fun yellow fish from *Finding Nemo*, I would argue was Pixar sending a

message to the world. What we often get fixated on and believe to be all ours are just fleeting things from this world. Seconds after those bubbles emerged from the treasure chest they were gone, worth nothing. But those bubbles filled the world of those fish.

If I became Bubbles the fish over MY truck what would happen if it was in an accident tomorrow and destroyed? The bubble of that pretty Dodge Dakota truck would have reached the surface and popped.

Not my truck.

Not my garage.

Not my schedule.

Not my house.

Not my money.

Not my clothes.

Not my computer.

Not my spare bedroom.

Not my bubbles.

Not MINE...